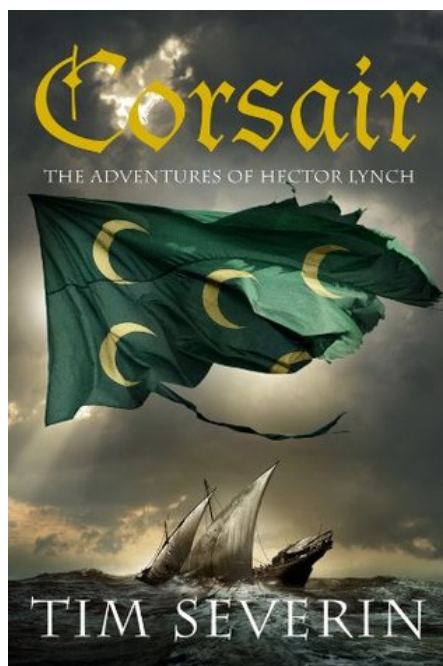




Corsair

Tim Severin

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1677, on a late summer's evening two ships lurk off the coast of southwest Ireland. They are Barbary corsairs from North Africa, slave catchers. As soon as it is dark, their landing parties row ashore to raid a small fishing village - on the hunt for fresh prey . . . In the village, seventeen-year-old Hector Lynch wakes to the sound of a pistol shot. Moments later he and his sister Elizabeth are taken prisoner. From then on Hector's life plunges into a turbulent and lawless world that is full of surprises. Separated from Elizabeth, he is sold to the slave market of Algiers, where he survives with the help of his newfound friend Dan, a Miskito Indian from the Caribbean. The two men convert to Islam to escape the horrors of the slave pens, only to become victims of the deadly warfare of the Mediterranean. Serving aboard a Turkish corsair ship, their vessel is sunk at sea and they find themselves condemned to the oar as galley slaves for France. Driven by his quest to find his sister, Hector finally stumbles on the chilling truth of her fate when he and Dan are shipwrecked on the coast of Morocco . . .

Corsair Details

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Author : Tim Severin

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From Reader Review Corsair for online ebook

Leigh says

This book was rich with the dark and somewhat unknown history of the Barbary Coast and the Mediterranean . It gave a vivid look at the life, culture, religious practices and politics that where apart of the seventeen century. The story was good without been great but well written and researched. Need a bit more character development but all in all a solid 4 stars.

Terri says

What a miserable disappointment.

I want to leave a review of this book, but I am afraid that what I have to say is 100% negative and who wants to give or receive so many negatives in their life? Not me, and probably not you.

All I'll say is that this book didn't appeal to me and I gave up on it with only 100 pages to go. I rarely give up with so little to go.

And in with one comment, I say a thousand words.

Louis says

This story felt to be more young adult fiction, which I guess is why some may have scored it more lowely. I did however think it was a good fast paced read, giving you insights to the Barbary life, both sides of the conflict between Muslims and Christians in the Med and nicely lined up to continue the story in yet another location of the 17th century.

Hannah says

Just kinda meh. The plot was exciting but boring to read.

Superdave Klapwyk says

Too much historical info and not enough character development. After reading I know almost nothing about the main character's personality, likes or strengths. I know more about his friends, who seem to be a lot more interesting. By the end I really could care less if Hector Lynch dies, as long as maybe one of his friends continued the story.

H.E. Bulstrode says

Taken captive by Barbary pirates? Don't worry, Tim Severin seems to think it's a blessing in disguise.

Tim Severin is an explorer, historian, and author of historical fiction: a man of many accomplishments. His knowledge of seafaring is both extensive and first-hand, with him having undertaken a number of remarkable voyages in reconstructions of historical craft. These include replicating the alleged voyage of sixth-century Irish Saint Brendan across the Atlantic in a wood and leather currach; travelling from Oman to India and China in a replica of a ninth-century Arab dhow, and undertaking two voyages in a replica Greek Bronze Age galley in the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. That he should thus turn his attention to matters maritime in his fiction should come as no surprise.

In *Corsair*, Severin focuses upon a different period again: the seventeenth century, with his theme being Barbary piracy. As you would expect, this proves to be a thoroughly well researched book, a fact that shines through in its wealth of historical detail and convincing descriptions of life aboard ship. If the reader should be inquisitive to learn about the conditions in the bagnios (the slave pens of contemporary Algiers), different gradations and uses of gunpowder, or the routines aboard one of Louis XIV's war galleys, then their curiosity should be satisfied. If, on the other hand, the reader hopes to find engaging characters with whom they can in some way identify, or feel any sympathy for, then I am afraid that they are likely to be grievously disappointed, for it is in his characterisation and passages of stilted dialogue that Severin is at his weakest. Moreover, it does not help that his protagonist – Hector Lynch – an Irish teenager with limited life experience who is taken into slavery from an insignificant Irish village, seems to effortlessly insinuate his way into the charmed circle of each influential personage with whom he comes into contact.

There is a certain lack of emotional charge to the language employed by the characters which renders the dialogue flat. It also results in the characters themselves – with the exception of the tongueless, noseless, and earless Karp – being poorly differentiated. Hector Lynch speaks in a fashion not overly dissimilar to that of the Maybot, just 'getting on with the job' of moving the reader from one expository scene to the next, where you can learn how to row, blast rock with different grades of power, or slaughter and disembowel a camel before drying its flesh for consumption on your journey across the desert. What you will not learn about are the inner psychological workings of the individuals named on the page, for there does not appear to be a great deal going on inside their heads. Perhaps I am being a little harsh in saying this, but I get the feeling that this is so because it appears that the book is aimed at a young adult market, and thus does not require a great deal of psychological or emotional sophistication. That it is such a book is purely a guess on my part, but if it's piratical derring-do on the high seas that the reader is looking for, I'd recommend Sabatini's *Captain Blood* over this any day, for it is a work that possesses both wit and verve, both of which *Corsair*, sadly, lacks. Although I've not read any of Severin's other works, I suspect that his history books are far more engaging than his works of fiction, because I did find the historical detail in this novel fascinating at times, it was just the story that let it down.

Nick Brett says

Other reviewers have pointed this out, but *Corsair* is an unusual historical novel. The norm is to have a story set in a historical period which provides an engaging backdrop to the narrative. Here the narrative seems to take second place to excessive information about the era. The balance just doesn't work.

The hero of the story is Hector Lynch, an Irishman taken as a teen by slavers. He is both too clever and too lucky, each time he gets himself into a situation there is an easy out, and he also lacks depth as a character so it becomes hard to care anyway. His sister was also taken and there is a theme about him trying to track her down, but this is resolved in about three dull pages and then Hector rolls onto his next unlikely escapade. Hector is also the focal point for us to be educated about the era, "What is that?" he might ask and of course the response is used to tell us all sorts of in depth detail. Too much in-depth detail.

This does really read as if a historian has wrapped a story around a historical period, but without the art and craft of story-telling. This is just flat and horrible. I had been looking forward to this and thought the author might be my kind of writer, but I think I'll give him a miss from now on.

James says

I found it hard to rate this book as I have been, since my first addiction to books, a lover of historical fiction. As such I think that maybe I have come to expect a higher standard from this genre than any other; comparing them to those who so inspired me to read - Cornwall, Scarrow et. al. As a result I am torn between giving two stars or three, and thus this two stars is actually a **2.5 Stars**.

I put this "low" rating down to the plot line and the characterisation. The plot was not bad, and the idea is a solid one; *captured man seeking his sister through hell and high water*, sounds good, right? Well the actuality is that it didn't flow well enough for my liking, with the plot line easily dividable into four sections - Turkish Slave, French Slave, Find sister, Desert escape - all of which actually felt like separate stories. There were events that had no semblance of impact on the actual story's plot, where I just thought, 'okay, that's interesting, now why did you show me that?'. If I was to be particularly critical of the storyline, I would say that this book was written with too much priority given to the information part, not the entertainment of the reader; almost as if the story was secondary to the historical information. Now, I love my historical fiction to be accurate, but first and foremost I read historical Fiction to be entertained, and this book just didn't focus enough on that for me.

The final nail in the coffin for me regarding the storyline was the exposure of Elizabeth and her 'story'. *Throughout this ordeal Hector is driven by the need to find out what happened to his sister*, is what the blurb says and is what happens. But I ask you this; if you were so driven to find your sister that you crossed continents, endured slavery and stood up to an ego-maniacal emperor, would you then leave your sister? (view spoiler) No. I know I wouldn't. And you can argue that people from that time are 'hardened' to the ravages of that period, but someone who was so driven as Hector was just to turn away from her... no, that was not right. It completely ruined it for me.

And the characterisation. Let's start with the good stuff, shall we? The support cast were brilliant, all were unique had separate personalities and seemed 'real'. They were perfect as support cast. The bad news? Hector. He was nothing special at all. He was written with as much depth as the support cast, and didn't stand out as the protagonist. Everyone was better than him, smarter than him, did more things than him. He didn't have a noticable personality, he didn't have a deep past, there was no discernible effect on him by his slavery. He was a non-entity. Someone who was drafted to lead us through this historical world, not as a character just as a lead by which the author could drag us around and show us his knowledge. In short, this book was more based on facts than characterisation.

Of course, that is not to say that it is truly bad. I still enjoyed parts of it and didn't think once of putting the book down. If you like historical fiction then you will enjoy this to a degree, especially if you enjoy the facts - of which there are plenty - and don't care as much for "drama". If not, then it is still worth a read and does provide some entertainment. However, if you are new to historical fiction then I advise you not to read this book, and instead start with Cornwell - one of the genre's best.

Have Fun Reading.

Rachel says

This book was really disappointing - the story and pacing was very sloooooow, the main protagonist was under-developed and not a particularly interesting character, and the ending was extremely lack-luster.

It was also VERY annoying that the main character, Hector Lynch, always managed to find someone who could help him out of whatever predicament he and his companions were in, so he was never really in that much trouble and there was never any real drama. Also the whole resolving of Hector finding his sister, seemingly his main impetus throughout the novel, was such a let-down and didn't really amount to anything.

Overall this book was let down by poor characterization and an over-abundance of, at times unnecessary, historic and geographical detail the author tried to shoe-horn in at every given opportunity.

Mary says

Ireland, 1677. Hector Lynch and his sister Elizabeth are kidnapped by corsairs. Hector is separated from his sister and sold into slavery. *Corsair* is the story of his adventures and his quest to discover what happened to his sister.

I listened to the audio version of this book, read by Rupert Farley, who is easily the best narrator I have had the pleasure of listening to. This book had so many character accents: Irish, English, French, Turkish, Spanish, and he did them flawlessly. While I enjoyed the narration, the story itself didn't hold my interest. Developments in the plot which should have been terrifying (kidnapping, near-rape, slavery, near-drowning, etc.) produced almost no emotional reaction from the main character. He was a passive character who seemed far too accepting of his circumstances. The search for his sister could have been a great source of tension in the story, but it's never given any weight, and because we never learn more about Elizabeth, it's hard to care about her as a character.

Rupert Matthews says

An enjoyable historic adventure yarn. Believable characters, good plot with twists and turns. Clearly written by a historian with much knowledge of the times - and particularly of the more obscure aspects of the interplay between the powers of the Mediterranean. As ever, a few quibbles on how much can possibly happen to one man - but such is the nature of adventure novels. On the whole I really enjoyed this book. gripping

Martin Belcher says

Set in the late 1670's and early 1680's, *Corsair* is real adventure tale set on the high seas, the Mediterranean, North Africa, deserts and coast. Wonderfully descriptive, full of adventure, intrigue, history, pain, suffering and joy. Hector Lynch the hero and main protagonist of the the story lives in a small isolated Irish village and his life is quite uneventful until one fearful night the village is raided by Barbary corsairs and Hector and

his sister and a group of young men and women from the village are kidnapped and taken away to Algiers in North Africa where they are sold as slaves. Hector's tale becomes ever more interesting and exciting and he manages to negotiate and duck and dive his way out of several very dangerous situations. Along with his fellow captive, Dan, a Miskito Indian from the Caribbean and Jacques Bourdon a slave from French naval galley they make a fine team driven on together by Hector's desperate attempts to discover what has happened to his sister and hopefully to free themselves from their desperate situation. I absolutely loved this book and it is clear that author Tim Severin knows his facts as there is a lot of historical accuracy in this novel. Wonderful and I have bought the next book in the series to find out what happens next to Hector Lynch and his companions.

Jorgen Schäfer says

Tim Severin's *Corsair* starts out with a raid by a Turkish slave trader on a city at the Atlantic coast of Ireland, where Hector Lynch and his sister Elizabeth are taken prisoner and brought to the Africa to be sold as slaves. Before they arrive, though, they are separated, and Hector starts on a long journey to find his sister.

The book is set in the 16th century and is able to both draw the reader into a fascinating and fast-paced story, as well as to relay a very accurate historical view of those times. It concludes with a summary of which people and events in the book are historically accurate and where the author took some artistic liberties, another important part of a good historical novel for me.

All in all this is by far the best book I have read in recent times, a must read for fans of historical novels. The follow-up books promise to be about piracy in the Caribbean, so if that is your kind of story, start here, it sets the mood perfectly.

John Speight says

I was rather dissatisfied in this book after reading the Viking series that came before. While those had vikings actually going a viking, *Corsair* actually has almost no piracy in it aside from the opening raid and a few pages of drifting in the Mediterranean. Mostly it's actually about how Hector is now a slave, but so very many people just look at him and decide that he is just so friggen cool and they need to be really nice to him and totally undermine the whole slave experience. The author seems to have done a lot of research and then decided to put EVERY RANDOM FACTOID that he discovered in this book. Several pages are devoted to the fantasia, and it does nothing for the plot or character development. In fact there is almost no character development in this whole book. Stuff happens and is immediately forgotten without consequence. The worst part is how the book ends, instead of going out with a bang, it goes out with a sigh.

Darlene says

Corsair is a series of events without much character development. By the time I got to the end, I didn't care what happened to the hero, or any other character.
